

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1-10 are amended; and claims 11-20 are added. No new matter is added. In view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representative by Examiner Grant in the August 9 personal interview. Applicants' separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

**I. Allowable Subject Matter**

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Office Action's indication that claims 2-6, 8 and 10 contain allowable subject matter. However, for the reasons discussed below, Applicants respectfully submit that all of claims 1-20 are allowable.

**II. Information Disclosure Statement**

An Information Disclosure Statement with Form PTO-1449 was filed in the above-captioned patent application on November 22, 2000. Applicants have not yet received from the Examiner a copy of the Form PTO-1449 initialed to acknowledge the fact that the Examiner has considered the disclosed information. The Examiner is requested to initial and return to the undersigned a copy of the Form PTO-1449. For the convenience of the Examiner, a copy of that form is attached.

**III. The Claims Satisfy All Formal Requirements**

The Office Action objects to claim 1. Claim 1 is amended to recite "judgment," thus obviating the objection. Withdrawal of the objection to claim 1 is respectfully requested.

**IV. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(a)**

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 7 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) over Suzuki. Based upon the text of the Office Action, it is the Applicants' belief that the Examiner

intended to apply JP2001-309171A to Suzuki. Based upon the Applicants' best understanding of the rejection, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants attach an English-language translation of Suzuki obtained from the Japanese Patent Office website ([<http://www.jpo.go.jp>]). Applicants have not reviewed the translation for accuracy.

Suzuki is not "prior art" to this present application. Specifically, the U.S. filing date of the present application (November 22, 2000) precedes the earliest date for which Suzuki is available as a reference (November 2, 2001). Thus, the prior art rejection is improper.

Furthermore, even if applicable, the binary processing means of Suzuki simply binarizes input image data. Suzuki does not teach or suggest judging a characteristic of an input image, as recited in claims 1 and 11.

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-20 are patentable over Suzuki. Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) be withdrawn.

**V. Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-20 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:RJK/can

Attachment:

Form PTO-1449 (11/22/00)  
English-language translation of JP-A-2001-309171

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